

Officer Wrote Novel Critical Of Pentagon

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii (AP)—A U.S. Navy officer today disclosed that he assumed a Russian name to write a book highly critical of some Pentagon and Navy thinking, and nursed his secret for two years.

Cmdr. John A. Davis Jr., 43, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, confirmed in an interview that he wrote the fictional work entitled "Shadow of Peril." Today was his last day in the Navy, following his voluntary retirement.

Davis plans to become a submarine warfare consultant with President Johnson's Office of Science and Technology.

He also says he'll be an assistant to the president of Grace Lines Steamship Co.

The pen name he used was Aleksandr I. Zhdanov, who is described as a Soviet submarine captain.

Hushup Alleged

The book accuses some United States admirals of hushing up reports of U.S. weaknesses at sea in order to get more airpower, and takes a few swings at some Pentagon policies on anti-submarine warfare.

Written while Davis was serving as a submarine and antisubmarine adviser to the chief of naval operations in the Pentagon in 1962, the book also needles admirals supporting showcase aircraft carrier programs.

The main theme of the story — told through the eyes of a Soviet submarine skipper — contends Soviet submarines can easily penetrate U.S. defenses and threaten United States naval forces.

Until his retirement today, at which he received a letter of commendation from Adm. Roy L. Johnson, commander in chief U.S. Pacific Fleet, Davis was a training officer at Pearl Harbor for submarine skippers.

The book was published by Doubleday & Co. in 1963.

Publisher Knew Name

A Doubleday spokesman said the publisher knew the author's true identity but that he forbade his name to be used.

"Evidently," the spokesman added, "he thought he'd get in trouble with somebody in the Navy. Now that he's out, we're free to say we knew it was him."

A publisher's note in front of the book describes it as "a novel of the deadly underseas struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States." The book, it says, was "based on fact."

It adds: "A pseudonym has been used to veil the authorship of this story which has been written as if indeed it were the account of a defected Russian submarine officer."

The note continues: "Some of the incidents in the Zhdanov story are known to have taken place."

One such incident, it says, was the gunshot wounding of a U.S. sailor while on a ship in the harbor at Beirut, Lebanon. The book, written in diary form, explains that the author was on a Russian submarine in the area and this is where the shot came from.

The publisher's note says: "Many of the persons named in the book are well known, either

nationally or in the United States or Communist world. From this launching pad of fact, however, 'Shadow of Peril' takes off into the unlimited space of fiction.

"The cold war patrols of the (submarine) W7 and F689 are doubtless products of the author's imagination. Whether they could happen or have happened is left entirely to the reader's own imagination."

Archaic Thinking Charged

To needle Navy admirals supporting carrier construction, the novel's fictitious Soviet naval leaders say U.S. admirals were guilty of archaic thinking.

It says a Soviet sub penetrated deep into New York Harbor at one time and could have blown Astronaut John Glenn out of the water after his Atlantic landing.

Its main theme was that Soviet submarines could easily penetrate U.S. defenses and threaten United States naval forces. It also argued that the Soviets were ahead of the United States in oceanographic studies.

The novel said the Soviets usually manage to slip spies and other agents ashore whenever hydrographic ships dock at American ports.